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Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": review of mainstreaming in organizations of the United Nations system

Statement submitted by the International Alliance of Women, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; and the International Federation of Women in Legal Careers and the International Federation of Women Lawyers, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996.

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The above-named organizations, taking note of General Assembly resolution 50/166 on the role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women in eliminating violence against women, look forward to its reports on its activities to eliminate violence and to their providing information to the Commission on the Status of Women and the Commission on Human Rights.

The above-named organizations also wish to bring to the attention of the Commission on the Status of Women the findings of the meeting of women in legal careers held in Toledo, Spain (6-9 September 2000). While acknowledging that violence is still employed against women worldwide, and being determined to work for its eradication, the above-named organizations have studied its causes and consequences in depth, including the effects upon women of armed conflict, culture, customs and practices, as well as the exercise of political power and the distribution of wealth which affect women negatively.

The Toledo Declaration calls upon all countries, in their efforts in eliminating violence against women, to:

1. Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in order to prevent and sanction effectively crimes against humanity and particularly those against women and children;

2. Respect and implement the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and to recognize and declare

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in a very explicit manner that torture and cruel or degrading treatment are crimes to which no proscription or amnesty may apply;

3. Establish national criminal courts in order to adjudicate violations of human rights and guarantee the prosecution of those guilty of the crimes of torture or cruel and degrading treatment. The courts must be able to receive reports of these crimes and their authors, prevent their impunity, and be able to remove from positions of power those judged guilty;

4. Include in their national legislation the possibility of granting asylum to women persecuted for reasons of gender, especially in cases of genital mutilation. It is essential that human rights prevail over cultural patterns and customs, and this should be so in all cases, especially during armed conflicts.

The above-mentioned organizations further recognize that the economic environment in which women live is often one of poverty preventing their attainment of personal autonomy, which increases their vulnerability to abuse and leads to exploitation in the labour markets. This increasing economic and social inequity prevents the development of women's and girls' human rights and generates new problems and social conflicts. It is necessary to make all possible efforts to prevent the destabilizing effects of the market economy which affect the decision-making capacity of many Governments. The design and evaluation of all social and economic policies of the States should integrate, at all times, a gender component and also allow women to participate in the decision-making that affects them. Further, procedures used in national accounting systems should be reformed so as to reflect truly the wealth produced by all, including the work of women, whether remunerated or not.

The democratic parity concept is the right of women to be represented in all decision-making, as in life, at 50 per cent. These democratic parity principles are based on non-discrimination rights, the right to political participation, and the duty of the public authorities to promote the conditions of, and remove the obstacles to, full citizenship in political, economic, social and cultural life. Additional studies and statistical analyses are needed to obtain information about the role of women in decision-making so that these data can insure the equal participation of women in every activity of civil society. Democratic parity requires: (a) respect for ideological diversity; (b) recognition of the women who have advanced feminist studies, including a theory of feminist politics; (c) recognition that the women's movement has opened debate, and the possibility of a variety of expressions and the solidarity of organized women, for the formulation of strategies leading to democratic parity; (d) recognition of such new movements as "Las Defensorias del Pueblo" in Latin America for the defence and promotion of women's human rights.

We believe in the absolute necessity of universal ratification and implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the opposition to all acts that are incompatible with its spirit, and the prompt ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women by those States that have not done so.

The above-named organizations reaffirm their commitment of ongoing action, in the countries where they have representation, in the defence of women's rights and the stimulation of women's active participation in all sectors of society. The above-mentioned organizations encourage women's integration in decision-making organs and will see to it that the needed legislation is enacted to assure this active participation.

The above-named organizations acknowledge, like Paulo Freire, that they are prophets of the obvious. However, they also acknowledge that the message must be repeated over and over again, for it is difficult to hear.